

# STUDENT ESSAY

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22 April 1966

## THE VALUE OF PUBLICLY STATING OUR NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

By

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JUN 29 1966

U. S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE

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USAWC RESEARCH ELEMENT  
(Essay)

The Value of Publicly Stating Our  
National Objectives

by

Lt Col James W. Barnett  
Corps of Engineers

US Army War College  
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania  
22 April 1966



## SUMMARY

The clear understanding of national objectives offers valuable benefits to the United States in the present world environment. This essay describes what some of those benefits are and why they are valuable in today's environment.

It concludes that the best way to ensure broad understanding of our national objectives is to have them publicly stated, and presents some of the problems that are associated with so doing.

## THE VALUE OF PUBLICLY STATING OUR NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

There are certain facts about the nature of our current world society that become important considerations in a discussion of national goals. Those facts are that the world today is characterized by closeness, complexity, sensitivity, and danger.

This shrinking planet of ours has evolved a world society in which the dependence of the world's peoples upon one another and their ability to affect one another has no precedent in history. No longer will circumstances permit us the luxury of ignoring unrest on other continents. We are close neighbors in the world community, and we are quickly made aware of a disturbance in our neighbors' back yards. Much of the world is in a constant state of chaos, and, no matter where it occurs, unrest affects the rest of the world's peoples. President Johnson highlighted this circumstance in one of his public statements.

The interdependence of nations is not a remote goal or a ringing slogan. It is a fact which we neglect at our peril.

Communications satellites, atomic rockets, and jet transports have made distant capitals into close neighbors. Our challenge is to transform this reality into an instrument for the freedom of man.<sup>1</sup>

Our world is complex. The technological revolution has advanced the fields of science and engineering at a prodigious rate during the past few decades. With some exceptions, where the industrial and

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<sup>1</sup>US Air Force, "The Importance of Communicating and Understanding," Air Force Policy Letter for Commanders, No. 1, 1 Jan. 1965, p. 2.

scientific revolutions have failed to penetrate, modern man is a master of marvelous devices which make him more productive, better protected, more carefully nurtured, better informed, happier(?), and more comfortable than ever before. We live in a maze of machinery, equipment, and facilities that are wonders in themselves, and, more wondrously, operate as parts of an infinitely complicated system which man has designed, created, operates, and enjoys. Inexorably, this system has grown up around modern man and made him a part of its complexities, and we feel it. The pressures of living in such a society are inescapable. They are part of the price we pay for the comforts which that society provides.

Our world economy is complex, too. Few people exist today entirely on their own output. Economic specialization is the common pattern, and with it comes an interdependence based upon the need to exchange goods and services for the necessities and the luxuries that man needs and wants. Elaborate trade structures have developed in which the participants all play a different, but vital, part in maintaining the economic balance. Fluctuations in one sector of the economy can, and do, result in unexpected perturbations to other sectors that upon superficial examination appear to be completely unrelated. Nations cannot enjoy the luxury of radical, unilateral alterations of their economic patterns because the interrelationships are too strong, and too widespread for the effects of their alterations to be truly unilateral.

Even the social side of our world is complex. Greater social



awareness, resulting from improved communications and broader education, stirs the desire for social improvement. The struggle for men's minds in the unrelenting battle between political ideologies serves to complicate man's attempts to maintain a satisfactory social intercourse. Deliberate exploitation of social unrest as a weapon of political warfare maintains a constant friction and confuses the real issues which are already complicated enough.

Clinton Rossiter identified the effect of added complexity on the American democracy and stated his observation as follows:

. . . strain arises out of the sheer numbers of problems we face. . . . The decisions to be made and executed each year are multiplying so rapidly that it is becoming harder to anticipate or coordinate them. . . . /More strain/ arises out of the nature of these problems. . . . The decisions to be made are more numerous; they are also tougher.<sup>2</sup>

The sensitivity of our current world is a characteristic that is increasingly apparent. A feeling that the world is sitting on a powder keg constantly nags at our consciousness. There has not been a significant period of lack of tension since before World War II. Even the temporary relaxation at the end of World War II was transitory and misleading, and no apparent relaxation occurred at the time of the Korean Armistice. On the contrary, continually heightening tension is a characteristic of the cold war, and there is no indication that the trend will be reversed. It is a time in which top world leaders

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<sup>2</sup>Clinton Rossiter, "The Democratic Process," Goals for Americans, p. 64.

have felt the necessity to become personally involved in relatively tiny operations because of the repercussions which those operations might have on the delicate balance of international relationships. This sensitivity is partly a result of our increased capability to communicate but that alone cannot account for all of the increase that we observe.

The combination of a shrinking world and its sensitivity greatly complicates the dialogue that must be maintained as part of the business of living together on the same planet. Clinton Rossiter discussed this added pressure on our political machinery in writing for the President's Commission on National Goals.

The results of all these developments is that American democracy is laboring under strains for which it was not entirely prepared. In the first place, it should be plain to see that, in operating the machinery, we no longer enjoy the margin for error of past years. . . . More and more decisions must be made quickly or go by default, be made correctly the first time on the assumption that there may be no second. . . . What we are up against, in short, is a shift from easiness to urgency in the circumstances under which American democracy must operate.<sup>3</sup>

Commensurate with, or perhaps as a result of, the closeness, complexity, and sensitivity of the world society is the final characteristic of danger. It may be the most readily apparent of them all. In any event, it is a circumstance which is never very deep below our conscious level of thought. Nations possess the capability to create catastrophes which rival the greatest natural disasters ever experienced.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 64-65.

Some of these capabilities are literally within minutes of execution; others may require longer to dispatch but have even more terrible and far-reaching effects. The habit pattern of a finger on the trigger is well established in the two greatest powers, and it is being copied by other nations as quickly as they can obtain the means.

The opportunity for miscalculation is enhanced by both the catastrophic capabilities and the constant readiness. With potential annihilation as an everpresent possibility, the pressure under which assessments and judgments must be made adds to the difficulty of the decision and to the chances that an improper evaluation will be made.

Within the balance of terror which exists between the two great powers, the opportunity exists for an increased frequency of smaller engagements, each deadly enough in itself to alter the course of progress of some of the other nations, and each potentially a source of escalation to unlimited war. Therefore, the possibility always exists that a major holocaust may occur, and the probability exists that continual conflict on a lower level will burn fitfully around the fringes of the political maneuvering engaged in by the democratic and the Communist blocs.

Against such a background as has been described, it is important that all the players in the world arena exhibit extraordinary talents if they are to keep in check the forces that might destroy them. The world situation demands understanding, tolerance, sound judgment, dedication to purpose, hard work, sacrifice, and efficiency. These may sound like platitudes, and there may be better descriptive phrases



but it is well to realize the importance of each one of them and how publicly stated national goals are an aid to achieving them.

### UNDERSTANDING

Politics, both foreign and domestic, are basically no different from any other form of relationship between individuals or organizations. Lack of understanding breeds suspicion and suspicion breeds distrust. Social intercourse in an environment of suspicion and distrust is infinitely more difficult than when understanding exists. That understanding does not have to be sympathetic; however, if it is, there is an added advantage. Sympathetic or not, relations based upon ignorance permit only random success.

It appears that there are too many instances wherein our allies, our opponents, or both, fail to understand US objectives with respect to specific situations. "Where does the US stand on this issue?" is an all-too-frequently heard remark in foreign capitals. We must be particularly perplexing to our allies, many of whom give strong consideration to the attitude of the United States in determining their own position. More importantly, ignorance of our objectives may encourage an opponent to commit a grave error in judgment and precipitate a critical situation which might never have materialized had the US position been known or, at least, been subject to accurate derivation from a pertinent US national objective.

A recent article in the U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings offered this observation:

In time of peace, the will of a nation must be judged by such things as the degree of mobilization, the tone of the popular press, and the public announcements of political leaders. But these indicators are often unreliable. This was demonstrated in the early 1950's in Korea, where the United States chose to act after indicating that it probably would not, and Indochina, where it chose not to act after indicating that it probably would.<sup>4</sup>

One might believe that failure to understand US objectives is an inevitable product of the difference between our heritage and ideology and those of the people of other nations. However, we have only to remember that there is widespread lack of understanding of certain domestic objectives by our own citizens and it becomes apparent that international, racial, ethnic, lingual, and political differences are not the sole contributors to a lack of understanding.

Our failure to communicate, and hence to achieve a common understanding is of grave concern to many political leaders. One of President Johnson's public statements clearly shows his belief that lack of understanding is a poor basis on which to build a stable social relationship. He said, "Today the cost of failure to communicate is not silence or serenity but destruction and dissolution."<sup>5</sup>

The President's concern is valid. There is an unusual amount of confusion within the United States and abroad as to what are the accepted national objectives, or, in some cases, as to whether any

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<sup>4</sup>Richard C. Bowman, "National Policy in the War of Wills," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. 91, Apr. 1965, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup>US Air Force, "The Importance of Communicating and Understanding," Air Force Policy Letter for Commanders, No. 1, 1 Jan. 1965, p. 2.

actually exist. The current literature is replete with debate over both the nature and the existence of national objectives. Debate over the nature of objectives is not considered unhealthy. On the contrary, continuous debate by responsible, interested, informed observers and participants provides a continuing, critical examination of the appropriateness of objectives as well as of the programs being pursued in their behalf. Debate, however, as to the existence of national objectives implies a lack of direction, and an indecisiveness that this nation cannot afford.

#### TOLERANCE

People who live closely in an atmosphere of tension and danger must develop a tolerant attitude toward the routine annoyances that are bound to occur. This is true whether the persons involved are a man and his wife, roommates in a dormitory, soldiers in a foxhole, the crew of a ship, or the citizens and leaders of opposing nations. If these individuals or groups are to be able to live together and to prosper, they cannot drain off their energies in petty conflicts over differences in attitudes on subjects which are not vital to the interest of any one of them.

It is easier to be tolerant of someone else when one understands his true objectives. If it can be seen that his attitude or action with respect to one particular situation is sound when viewed from the perspective of his total objectives, it is easier to accept his position even though it may be contrary to one which we might prefer.



However, without knowledge of his objectives, it is difficult to maintain the proper perspective from which to analyze his position.

Tolerance implies a certain amount of trust. At least, a tolerant individual is more likely to weigh situations with some care before taking precipitous action. This pause for deliberation before action is exceedingly important as a partial counter to the sensitivity that can so quickly generate a dangerous confrontation.

### SOUND JUDGMENT

When the demands of society are so great, the problems to be faced so numerous and so difficult, and when the dangers incident to a poor decision are so massive, the need for sound judgment at every level is increased. We are not only faced with many choices between right and wrong, or between good and bad, but we are faced with a great number of choices between good and not quite so good or between bad and not quite so bad.

One of the difficulties in choosing between the many good opportunities is that the number of worthwhile things in which we, as a nation, might engage seems endless. Any initial listing of proposed national objectives would clearly include more worthwhile undertakings than the resources available for their concurrent pursuit. Our resources, no matter how great, are only finite, hence priorities must be established. The judgments necessary for the proper sorting of many programs, all competing for the same resources, need to be made against a yardstick of meaningful objectives if the resources are to

be applied most efficiently. In studying the federal budget process, the Committee for Economic Development arrived at a pointed conclusion regarding the need for clear goals. Their report states,

In recent years, the need has become apparent for determined and precise definition of the ends which we, as a nation, hope to achieve. We are rapidly reaching the point where opportunities and apparent requirements for spending at all levels of government challenge even out great capacity to produce the needed resources. All programs should be subjected to periodic reassessment in terms of basic purposes to identify those of least utility. Experience has shown that judgments as to where and how much to spend will be made whether or not rational goals and reasonable objectives have been set. In the absence of stated goals and objectives, these judgments will be made less well and at greater cost.<sup>6</sup>

The surest method for insuring sound judgments is to base them upon realistic plans and estimates for achieving clearly defined goals. Without realistic plans and estimates, any judgments as to the relative attractiveness of competing national objectives must be made in the gloom of ignorance as to the "costs" involved. The Committee for Economic Development takes the position that--

The definition of national goals and priorities provides a yardstick for both the executive and legislative branches of government against which to measure . . . proposals.<sup>7</sup>

Much the same line of argument applies to the judgments that must be made between the bad and the not quite so bad situations. There are frequent instances when the United States is forced to play some role in a situation in which no involvement at all might be preferable.

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<sup>6</sup>Committee for Economic Development, Budgeting for National Objectives, pp. 28-29.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

Choosing the most appropriate role to play in these circumstances is often extremely important, and is most likely to be very difficult. In each case, the probability of exercising sound judgment is enhanced by a clear understanding of our national goals. If the contribution which each course of action makes, or fails to make, toward achievement of a recognized goal can be determined, there is a valid basis for exercising judgment. Without such a basis, even the wisest adjudicator cannot be expected to deliver sound judgments.

#### DEDICATION TO PURPOSE

In a world as visibly complex as ours today, it is difficult to maintain equilibrium and dedication to purpose in the face of the multitude of diversions. As mentioned previously, we have more and tougher problems today. In addition, our technology permits us to be aware of more situations than in the past, and with this greater visibility we are subject to being wooed away from our long-term goals in favor of dealing with the exigencies of the moment. Pre-occupation with current events by most people tends to dim the focus of attention on goals for which we must strive over an extended period of time. This extract from the Department of State Bulletin states the situation, and the danger, very accurately.

. . . it is correct--or at least it is natural--for the channels of mass communication to be dominated by highly visible and inherently dramatic fireworks. Always in history the big audience has seemed a more pressing goal than wide understanding of public policy.

But fascination with fireworks can obscure the deeper,



slower, stronger tides beneath the surface of world politics. And preoccupation with crises can obliterate the perspective needed for judgments about how well or how badly we are faring in pursuit of our world policies.<sup>8</sup>

Such preoccupation with the problems of the moment can result in a situation where all the efforts of the nation are devoted to handling the crises of the day and no plan nor preparation made to avert the crises of tomorrow. Henry Kissinger sees this situation as a real danger to the United States today.

If there is no doctrine at all and a society operates pragmatically, solving problems "on their merits" as the saying goes, every event becomes a special case. More energy is spent deciding where one is than where one is going. Each event is compartmentalized and dealt with by experts in the special difficulties it involves without an adequate understanding of its relation to other occurrences. This is the risk the United States policy has been running since it undertook the stewardship of the Free World.<sup>9</sup>

Only deliberate adherence to well-conceived plans for clear objectives is likely to avoid this dangerous pitfall.

Important national objectives are not likely to be achieved quickly. Several years of effort are probably required to execute a deliberate assault on a matter of national importance. During that period it is easy for people to lose touch with the trend of a program and to fail to understand how the sequence of daily events contributes to some ultimate end. The existence of a clear objective and some

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<sup>8</sup>Harlan Cleveland, "The Broadcasting of World Politics," Department of State Bulletin, Vol. LIII, No. 1380, 6 Dec. 1965, p. 899.

<sup>9</sup>Henry A. Kissinger, "The Importance of Communicating and Understanding," Air Force Policy Letter for Commanders, No. 1, 1 Jan. 1965, p. 1.

knowledge of the plan for its attainment will provide order and reason to a long-term program and maintain the support of the people. In addition, it may identify the loss of popular support and a need for reevaluation of the objective, the plan, or both.

A valuable technique for maintaining dedication to purpose over a long-term is to provide intermediate milestones for success. From a long-term objective, short-term accomplishments can be derived and identified as being significant contributions to the ultimate end. When each of these short-term objectives is attained, there is a definite psychological benefit in the sense of achievement that it brings. The public needs to feel success from time to time. Not all the objectives can be of such long-term that we never seem to get there. The careful selection of intermediate steps along the way will fulfill the short-term needs while continuing to contribute to a long-term objective.

It should be recognized that the phenomenon of positive feedback by the very identification of objectives can be a valuable aid to achieving and maintaining dedication to purpose. Edward F. Denison and Herbert Stein allude to this effect in an essay prepared for the President's Commission on National Goals.

We should refer here to one kind of benefit and one kind of cost that we have not mentioned but that may be very important. There may be value in having a "national goal" aside from the benefits of achieving any particular goal and almost without regard to what the goal is. The goal may be inspiring, give "point" to life, and serve as a common bond holding the society together.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Edward F. Denison and Herbert Stein, "Economic Growth," Goals for Americans, p. 190.

It is impossible to accurately predict on which occasions the existence of clear objectives will provide this highly desirable effect but it is absolutely certain that the effect cannot occur without the existence of clearly defined objectives.

John K. Boyle, writing in a book entitled Executive Power, observes how the establishment of clear goals and objectives has a stimulating effect on the pursuit of their attainment which is over and above the simple identification of the desired results. He states:

A common misconception is that goals are mere dreams. Actually . . . goals are clear and specific, practical and realistic, powerful and dynamic. Not only will you act upon your goals but your goals will act upon you. Goals are absolutely essential to success.<sup>11</sup>

Every religion has recognized the need for a set of goals and objectives to which its disciples can adhere. The Christian Bible relates how the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years until Moses was given the Ten Commandments,<sup>12</sup> and of how they prospered and grew strong after living according to those Commandments.<sup>13</sup> Students of all the great religions recognize the need for purpose in life and for goals in the hereafter.

It might be argued that such religious pronouncements as the Ten Commandments are not objectives or goals but standards which must be adhered to in the pursuit of goals. However, when the Lord commands,

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<sup>11</sup>Alfred Armand Montapert, ed., Distilled Wisdom, p. 173.

<sup>12</sup>Exodus 31:18, and 34:28-29.

<sup>13</sup>Deuteronomy 10:22.



"Thou shalt not Steal," it is difficult to conceive of Him directing us toward a world in which stealing is a commonly accepted practice. Accordingly, it seems that "no stealing" is a fairly clear objective of a Christian society (and, of course, of many other religious societies as well).

A fine example of how a well-selected objective can keep a long term program properly directed is our nation's initial objective in space; that is, to put a man on the moon by 1970. You may make your own predictions regarding whether or not our astronauts will be there by then but there is no avoiding the fact that this clearly stated objective has galvanized the planning of our space program toward achievement of this very finite accomplishment. Dr. Wernher Von Braun very accurately analyzed the appropriateness of President Kennedy's objective in introductory remarks to a short animated film which describes the technique to be used in flying the lunar landing mission. Dr. Von Braun said,

I have always considered President Kennedy's commitment that we are going to put men on the moon in this decade as a kind of signal, an objective very clearly defined, universally understandable, which cannot be debated.

Everybody knows what the moon is, what this decade is, and what it means to get some people there and bring them back. It puts the program into focus in a very beautiful, clear, and concise way.<sup>14</sup>

It has certainly kept a large number of very fine people dedicated to that purpose.

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<sup>14</sup>Wernher Von Braun, "Introductory Remarks to Film," Moon Mission, 12 Mar. 1963.

## HARD WORK AND SACRIFICE

Our nation clearly occupies a position of world leadership, and yet, it is beset on every side by great demands and serious challenges--demands to continue to improve the performance of the world's greatest democracy, and challenges to compete for the minds of men and for the freedom of the whole world. In such an environment, the United States must proceed with great energy to meet the continuing demands and challenges. Our worldwide commitments can only be met if the contribution of each citizen involves a considerable amount of hard work and sacrifice.

If we had significantly smaller defense outlays; if we had no programs of foreign economic or military aid; if all of our great productivity could be devoted to only satisfying our own demands, we could maintain our high standard of living with considerably less effort than we currently expend. However, nothing in our present situation nor anything in the immediate future gives any indication that our national commitments are going to decrease. On the contrary, all indications are that they will increase substantially.

Most Americans want to be positive contributors to the advancement of their country. Most are perfectly willing to do their part in national undertakings so long as they know, or can reasonably infer, what their part is and what the national undertakings are. However, if they are going to be required to work and to sacrifice over an extended period of time, they must know and understand to what purpose they are striving.

In 1941, Franklin Roosevelt told the nation that we had to produce 60,000 airplanes a year to beat the Axis powers.<sup>15</sup> When he said it, it hardly seemed possible. Yet, that production rate was attained before the end of World War II. The amount of hard work and sacrifice that went into meeting that national goal can be vividly recalled by most of us. We can also recall that it was performed without protest, and with sincere dedication, by the thousands of citizens who played a part in the aircraft industry at the time. They knew what the objective was and why it was established.

There are always obstacles to the attainment of every worthwhile goal. Hard work and sacrifice are the most common ingredients for overcoming obstacles but there must be a willingness to perform the work and to make the sacrifices if the obstacles are to be overcome. Hannah More is quoted as saying, "Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off the goal."<sup>16</sup> The corollary is equally true; i.e., if you do not take your eyes off the goal the obstacles will not frighten you.

We cannot afford to frighten, or discourage, people who must work hard and make sacrifices to contribute toward our national goals. Therefore, we must provide the clearly stated goals and ensure that they are properly understood if we are to expect our citizens to keep them constantly in view and to continue to do their parts.

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<sup>15</sup>Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "Message to Congress on the State of the Union," New York Times, 8 Jan. 1943, p. 12.

<sup>16</sup>Montapert, op. cit., p. 173.



## EFFICIENCY

There should be no willingness to accept vague objectives. If they cannot be clearly identified, adequately described, and generally recognized, they have been improperly chosen! They must serve as landmarks along the route toward our national goals, and what good are landmarks that cannot be found?<sup>17</sup>

In the ridiculous extreme, lack of clear objectives for a society, or any element thereof, is analogous to the plight of a man who has been told to go from here to there without being told where there is. It matters not how capable, or how willing, that man may be, without knowledge of where there is, only two possibilities exist for him to ever arrive. Neither can be considered efficient.

First, he can conduct a search in the general direction of where he thinks there is, and if he continues long enough, the chances are that he will probably arrive. However, if there (his goal) has never been adequately described to him, he is not likely to recognize it when he does arrive, and he may continue to expend effort in its pursuit long after it is necessary.

Second, he can move ahead from here, following the detailed directions of some leader (who presumably knows where there is), and

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<sup>17</sup>Committee for Economic Development, Budgeting for National Objectives, p. 28. As a part of the Committee's conclusions, this statement appears: "We believe that clear statement of national goals and forthright definition of governmental objectives are neither unattainable nor without utility. We do not agree with those who argue that specific programs are best developed as separate elements through the many, complex, and often conflicting interactions between units in the executive branch and congressional subcommittees under the pressure of interest groups."

rely upon those directions to give purpose to his every action. This is wasteful of the time of the leader and wasteful of the talents and initiative of the man himself. Furthermore, it is contrary to the standards of individualism which are such an important part of our American heritage.

Instead, we can capitalize upon the talents of our citizens by delineating clear objectives from which they can deduce logical roles for each to play. Clearly understood objectives permit intelligent improvisation to circumvent unanticipated difficulties and to capitalize upon fortuitous developments. If only a few of the national leaders know what our objectives are, they cannot expect the citizenry to reason soundly and to choose wisely when confronted with an opportunity to materially affect the progress of history.

Henry M. Wriston, writing for the President's Commission on National Goals, quoted Carl Schurz, who, speaking in Faneuil Hall in 1859, said,

Ideals are like stars; you will not succeed in touching them with your hands. But like the seafaring man on the desert of waters, you choose them as your guides, and following them you will reach your destiny.<sup>18</sup>

What Carl Schurz might have added is that no navigator in his right mind would rely upon a star which he could not identify, and neither will any thinking man who has concern about his future.

In business, where the measure of success is generally quantified in terms of profit and loss, there is increasing attention being paid

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<sup>18</sup>Henry M. Wriston, "The Individual," Goals for Americans, p. 39.

to the techniques of management that contribute to greater business success.

Recently the editors of Dun's Review prepared a searching study of the ten best-managed companies in the country. One dominant trait emerged from this project. The one characteristic common to the "best" firms was that every company had goals that were so well-defined that they were not only clear but unmistakable.<sup>19</sup>

It is not suggested that the world of private business can be directly and completely transposed to the world of government but neither should it be forgotten that the conduct of government today is probably the greatest business enterprise that the world has ever seen. It is true that the standards of profit and loss cannot be as simply applied to the business of government as they are to private enterprise but the fact remains that the business side of government accounts for the major share of its activities and has the most direct effect upon the lives of its citizens. Clinton Rossiter expressed this as follows:

The processes of modern government are in large part administrative. Democracy must, therefore, be judged in terms of how efficiently it inspects meat and collects statistics as well as how forcefully it makes foreign policy.<sup>20</sup>

In certain national objectives, time is a critical element; i.e., it is important that certain things be accomplished by certain dates

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<sup>19</sup>Edwin Emmett, Form Letter from Dun's Review, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup>Rossiter, op. cit., p. 68.



if they are to be of maximum benefit (or, in some cases, of any benefit at all). Unless this requirement is known and given due consideration, all of the energies expended in pursuit of the objective might as well have been devoted to other activities. We cannot afford this kind of waste.

Our political machinery spends a great deal of effort in assessments. "Taking stock" is a popular pastime in our bureaucracy. At least an equivalent amount of effort would appear warranted to be spent choosing wisely where we are to go. Oliver Wendell Holmes is quoted as saying, "The great thing in this world is not so much where we stand as in what direction we are moving."<sup>21</sup>

Few things are really stagnant. Furthermore, there is absolutely nothing that can be done to alter what already exists. Man's purpose should be to influence what is to be, for only when a carefully prepared plan is drawn for accomplishing a finite objective can it be expected that an efficient approach to its accomplishment will result.

#### SOME PROBLEMS

It should not be presumed that there are no problems associated with publicly stating our national objectives. We cannot expect to get something for nothing, and the benefits that we accrue in greater understanding, more tolerance, etc., that have been discussed above, come with a price attached.

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<sup>21</sup>Montapert, op. cit., p. 172.

There is, to some extent, reduced flexibility. It requires more effort to reorient a strongly oriented program than one which is proceeding under loose guidance toward an indistinct goal. However, this is the antithesis of dedication to purpose. If you want the value of dedication to purpose, you must be prepared to accept the cost of reduced flexibility.

There is the fact that national objectives must be prepared by fallible men. They will contain errors of omission and commission. They will require revision, and they may be misunderstood. They are subject to the same failings as any other form of human endeavor. This should not void their value. It should be a valuable warning to do our best to prepare them well, and to expect that they will contain errors.

There is the problem of preparing them for both internal and external consumption. Certain objectives, stated certain ways, may be most appropriate for our own citizens but most inappropriate from the viewpoint of the citizens of another nation. It is an unfortunate fact of life that you cannot please all of the people all of the time, and we should not attempt to. We are not competing in a world popularity contest, and we cannot expect everyone to agree with all of our national objectives. What we can anticipate is that if our objectives are understood to be reasonable and honorable when considered in total, we can expect to have less difficulty with individual ones which may conflict with the particular desires or attitudes of another nation.

There is the problem of disclosing our intentions to a potential enemy. There may be good reason to maintain a certain amount of secrecy about the means by which we hope to achieve some of our national objectives but it is difficult to see how the public statement of what those objectives are would carry any particular penalty or be any particular surprise to a potential enemy.

There are other problems not identified above but they, like the ones that have been discussed, appear to be more problems of how national objectives are prepared and administered rather than incontestable arguments that they should not be prepared. Of course, it is of no value to propose a theoretically sound course of action in which there are unsurmountable obstacles to putting the theory into practice. However, it is not believed that such is the case with respect to publicly stating our national goals. The difficulties should not be minimized but neither should they be considered as more than what they are; that is, problems of "how to" not "why to."

#### CONCLUSIONS

The nature of the current world society is characterized by closeness, complexity, sensitivity, and danger.

This situation demands understanding, tolerance, sound judgment, dedication to purpose, hard work, sacrifice, and efficiency, and clear goals contribute positively to all of these.

In spite of the problems inherent to the process, the best way of ensuring clear goals is to have them carefully prepared and



publicly stated.

Therefore, the value of publicly stating our national objectives is the improved capability of our citizens to deal with the demands of their environment when they know toward which goals they are striving.



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